

Green Country Veteran

A JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER MAGAZINE

ISSUE 05 | WINTER 2014

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summer's
National Veterans
Golden Age Games!**

**June 28 - July 2, 2014
Fayetteville, Ark.**

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Green Country
Veteran is the official
magazine for
Veterans who receive
their care through the
Jack C. Montgomery
VA Medical Center.



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On the cover: A Navy Veteran plays golf during a previous National Veterans Golden Age Games event.

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Green Country Veteran

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JCMVAMC Named to Joint Commission's 'Top Performers' List

In November 2013, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) was recognized as a top performer on key health care quality measures for 2012 by The Joint Commission, an independent panel that accredits and certifies health care organizations.

JCMVAMC was one of 32 VA medical centers that received the recognition. While all 151 VA medical facilities are accredited by The Joint Commission, the list recognizes facilities that are the top performers based on The Joint Commission's annual review of evidence-based care that is closely linked to positive patient outcomes. This program recognizes Joint Commission-accredited hospitals for a significant achievement in measures that produce the greatest positive impact on patient outcomes.

"We were pleased to hear that we've been named a Top Performer," said James Floyd, JCMVAMC Director. "It is a reflection of the hard work of our staff who take great pride in caring for our nation's heroes."

Additionally, JCMVAMC was one of only nine health care organizations that were named to the top performing list in the state of Oklahoma.

The Joint Commission is a not-for-profit organization that ensures the quality of U.S. health care by its intensive evaluation of more than 20,000 health care organizations. In addition to being named in this report, this year's top performers are highlighted at <http://www.jointcommission.org> and The Joint Commission's Quality Check website at www.qualitycheck.org. ★



New Self-Service Kiosks Increase Convenience for Veterans

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

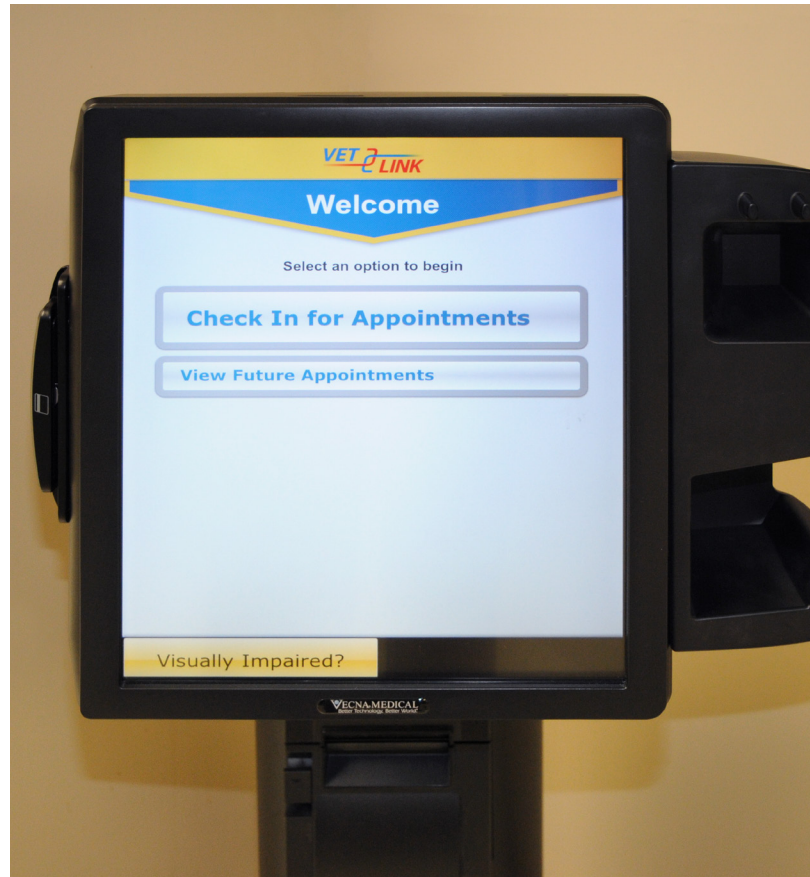
Patients at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) and our outpatient clinics in Harts-horne, Tulsa and Vinita can now check-in for their appointments via new self-service touchscreen kiosks.

A total of 31 VetLink kiosks were installed this fall, which also allows Veterans to view upcoming appointments, update personal information, review insurance information and check their account balances.

To use the kiosk, Veterans will need to use their Veterans Identification Card. Once they have checked in, the kiosk will print out the Veterans' appointment time and location for the Veteran. VA staff can track the Veteran's check-in status in real time via a VetLink desktop application.

"Veterans will no longer have to stand in line at the front desks," said Connie Engel, JCMVAMC VetLink Coordinator. "The kiosk will tell them if they need to go to the desk. If everything is up to date such as their insurance

Vietnam Veteran Darrell Geiger checks into his appointment via a VetLink kiosk at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.



New VetLink Kiosk

information, they can just have a seat."

While the kiosks are designed to increase convenience and improve the check-in process, Veterans do not have to use them and can still check-in for their appointments at the front desk. However, they are encouraged to try the new kiosks.

"VetLink empowers Veterans to have more control over their personal and medical information and gives them the capability to ensure their information is current and accurate," said Engel.

The VetLink system is also secure and designed to ensure Veteran privacy. The kiosk does not store patient information and is equipped with a privacy screen and a proximity sensor to reset when a user walks away.

As an added benefit, the kiosks will provide more time for medical support assistants to make follow-up phone calls to patients and schedule appointments.

The VetLink kiosks are part of a nationwide Veterans Health Administration program called Veterans Point of Service (VPS) and is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs Transformation Twenty-One Total Technology (T-21) initiative to modernize information technology within the VA system. ★



New Robots Zapping Germs

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist
Photos by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) has a new cutting edge tool to battle deadly pathogens and kill multi-drug resistant organisms that put patients at risk: the Xenex disinfection system.

JCMVAMC began using five Xenex robots in October throughout the hospital, which are 20 times more effective than standard chemical cleaning practices.

The Xenex system works by pulsing xenon, an inert gas, twice a second at high intensity in an ultraviolet flashlamp. This produces germicidal ultraviolet C (UVC) and is effective against even the most dangerous pathogens, including *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff), norovirus, influenza and staph bacteria, including methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, better known as MRSA.

JCMVAMC is the first hospital in Eastern Oklahoma to use the Xenex system, which was launched in June 2010, and has been credited for helping other healthcare facilities in the U.S. decrease their MRSA and C. diff infection rates.

Cheryl Robbins, JCMVAMC Multi Drug-Resistant Organisms Prevention Coordinator, said the primary goal of the Xenex systems is to increase patient safety by reducing health care associated infections, which are not only dangerous to a patient but also lengthen the patient's stay and cost an average of \$20,000 to \$30,000 to treat.

"With these machines, we're hoping to decrease the possibility of those incidences happening," said Robbins. "So we're trying to save money, decrease the length of stay as well as keep our patients safe and that's the first thing, to keep our patients safe from any type of infection or colonization."

The Xenex robots supplement traditional cleaning methods by Environment Management Service (EMS) staff. After patient care areas are cleaned, EMS staff wheel the Xenex robot into the room, position it beside the patient bed, begin the automated sequence and then leave the room.

Xenex disinfection system



The staff then places a sign outside the room, which warns people not to enter while the robot is in operation. A motion sensor on the robot automatically shuts off the machine if anyone should enter. The process is then repeated on the other side of the bed and in the bathroom, for a total of 5-10 minutes to thoroughly clean each room.

"Every room we clean, we also run a machine in it," said Ted Brown, a housekeeping aide who operates the Xenex system. "It's real easy to use. They kill all the germs. I think they've made a big difference already." ★



Ted Brown, a housekeeping aide, turns on the Xenex system inside an inpatient room.

JCMVAMC Now Offering MRI Services

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist



MRI Machine

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center began offering on-site magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services for the first time in December in the hospital's newly constructed MRI Suite, a 5,400-square-foot facility located at the North end of the medical center.

Along with performing MRI exams for outpatients, the MRI staff are also doing exams for inpatients and patients who visit the Emergency Department. Radiology Service expects to complete approximately 1,500 MRI exams per year.

Previously, the medical center had to solely use outside facilities for detailed imaging that was not possible with computed tomography (CT) scanning alone. In Fiscal Year 2013, the hospital sent 887 Veterans to outside facilities.

"The addition of this new on-site MRI

imaging facility greatly benefits our inpatients, as well as our outpatients, by providing them with convenient and timely services," said Dr. Vijay Aggarwal, chief of Radiology Service. "We are delighted that our Veterans are now benefitting from the most up-to-date imaging technology."

The new MRI Suite gives the medical center a powerful imaging tool that allows physicians to diagnose and monitor treatments for a variety of medical conditions, including abnormalities of the brain and spinal cord; tumors, cysts, and other deviations in various parts of the body; injuries or irregularities of the joints; and diseases of the liver and other abdominal organs for example.

MRI can give physicians different information about structures in the body than from other imaging tools. For example, an MRI exam of a joint

can provide detailed images of ligaments and cartilage, which are not visible using other imaging tools.

"MRI provides an additional complementary imaging tool in addition to CT, X-Ray and ultrasound," said Dr. Jeffrey Hesse, MRI Radiologist. "There are some areas of the body that are really best evaluated with an MRI."

The new suite cost approximately \$3.4 million and includes a Philips Ingenia Omega 1.5T MRI machine, two exam rooms, control room, image reading room, three patient dressing rooms, lobby and waiting room, restrooms, storage rooms and lockers for patients and staff.

While the MRI Suite currently has only one MRI machine at this time, the suite does include a second exam room, which gives the medical center the option of expanding MRI services

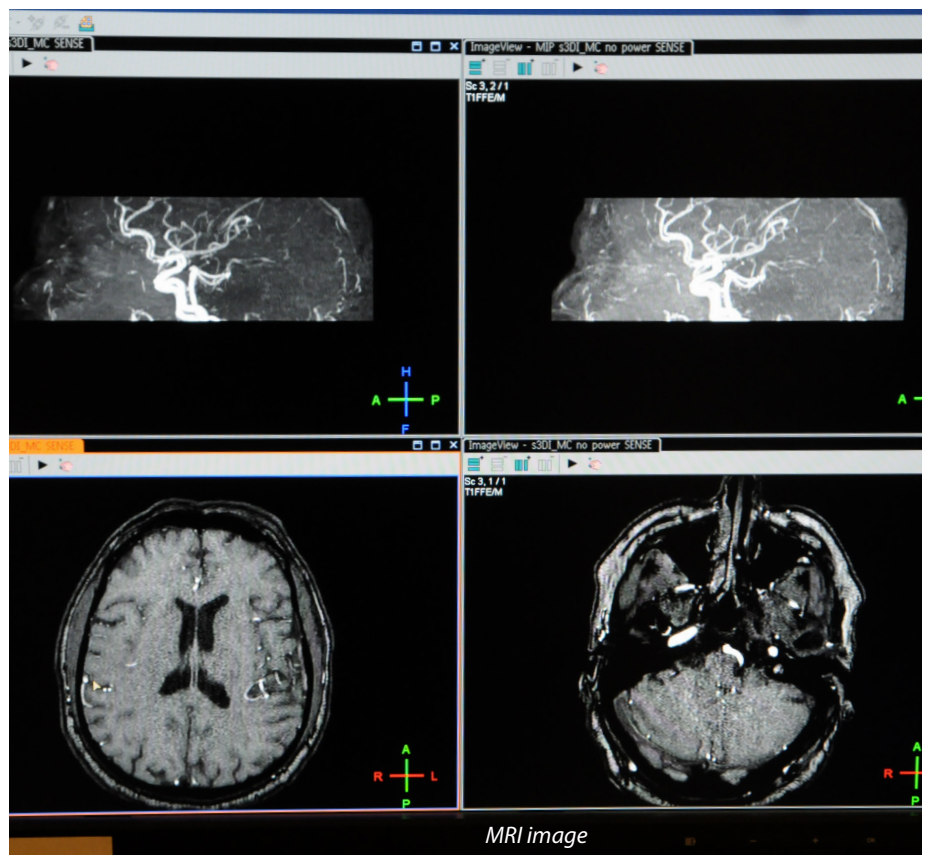


Dr. Jeffrey Hesse, a MRI Radiologist, interprets an MRI exam.

in the future by purchasing a second MRI machine.

Patients can access the MRI Suite from inside the medical center by Prosthetics Service or from outside through the suite's own entrance at the North end of the building. Veterans who have questions about their MRI appointment should call the medical center at 918-577-3989. ★

"We are delighted that our Veterans are now benefiting from the most up-to-date imaging technology."



MRI image

Behavioral Medicine Pioneers Recall First Outpatient Clinic for Mental Health

Story and photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) recently said goodbye to two mental health pioneers, Steve Jones and Janet Gearin, who retired respectively on Dec. 31, 2013 and Jan. 3, 2014. Both Jones and Gearin not only helped establish the first outpatient mental health clinic at the hospital, but also laid the groundwork for the hospital's Behavioral Medicine Service.

Fred Hoefer, who served as the VA Medical Center Director in Muskogee from 1972 - 1977, recognized the need for an expansion of the hospital's mental health services and made the commitment to hire full-time mental health professionals.

Prior to that, the hospital offered mental health services to inpatients only and contracted the services of a local psychiatrist who treated them one day per month and also flew in two psychiatrists from the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center twice a month.

On March 10, 1975, the hospital hired Gearin, a Clinical Nurse Specialist, as the first full-time mental health professional. In June 1975, the hospital then hired Jones, a social worker, and later a psychologist and psychiatrist.

The new team was tasked with treating inpatients and starting a brand new outpatient clinic. Since the hospital did not have an inpatient mental health unit at that time, they also arranged for mental health patients to be admitted at nearby VA hospitals such as in Little Rock, Ark. and Topeka, Kan.

"I never knew what it was like to go home on time," said Gearin. "We were helping anybody who had any kind of mental health issues. Any part of the hospital could call us."

Jones said his youthful age was a benefit at that time.

"It was good I was young and had energy," he said with a laugh. "We were pretty good at what we did. We provided the best care we could with the resources that we had."

In the fall of 1975, the hospital officially opened the new outpatient clinic in Bldg. 9. Until then, Gearin and Jones worked wherever they could find a desk.

"I didn't have an office," said Gearin. "I was all over the place in the Emergency Care area. I was in what we now call Primary Care. I was also up in the hospital (treating inpatients)."

Gearin said one of the initial challenges was the lack of education about prescriptions that were available to treat mental health patients. With an academic background in psychopharmacology, the scientific study of the effects drugs have on mood, sensation, thinking and behavior, Gearin spent time educating physicians and gave advice as to which medications they should prescribe.

"I had a lot of guys coming in that had been in Vietnam. When a new patient would come in and said he was in Vietnam, I knew what he was going to tell me ..."

"It was all new," said Gearin. "I knew all of the medicines and there weren't that many back then as now. The doctors didn't really know psychiatry or psychiatric medication that well. They relied on me to be able to tell them."

Gearin said another challenge was giving a diagnosis to Veterans who suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which wasn't recognized as an official diagnosis by the American Psychiatric Association until 1980.

However, Gearin said she was able to recognize the symptoms of PTSD.

"I had a lot of guys coming in that had been in Vietnam," said Gearin. "When a new patient would come in and said he was in Vietnam, I knew what he was going to tell me. I knew what kind of symptoms, complaints and problems he was going to have. But, at that time, we didn't have a diagnostic category for it."

Gearin said she is proud of her efforts to treat Veterans with PTSD.

"I knew then that I was going to be pretty good at this job," she said. "I could help guys recover to some degree where they could go forward with their lives, and that gave me a lot of confidence to know that I was seeing and understanding what they were really trying to tell me."

Gearin said she is proud of her work to help lay the foundation of the behavioral medicine program.

"Steve and I laid the foundation and I like to think we laid a very stable foundation," said Gearin. "It was all pioneering back then. We really didn't have anything to go by. We just developed a program and kind of flew by the seat of our pants. If Veterans needed hospitalization, we made sure they got in somewhere. If they needed outpatient therapy, we gave them outpatient therapy. If they needed medication, they were given medication."

Today, the hospital employs more than 100 full-time employees who work for the Behavioral Medicine Service and provide mental health treatment at the Muskogee hospital, JCM East in Muskogee, Tulsa Behavioral Medicine Clinic and Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics. In addition, JCMVAMC established a 15-bed Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit in 2006.

Jones said he is proud of VA for not only making a commitment to mental health, but also providing the resources to meet the needs of Veterans.

"The resources VA has given us has made a big, big difference," said Jones. "When you go from having a psychiatrist half a day a week to where we have more than 20 psychiatrists now - that has to improve things. We now have more than 20 psychologists from one psychologist. We have around 50 social workers. We have quality staff and therefore we can provide quality care." ★



Steve Jones, Ph.D., poses for a photo in front of Bldg. 9 at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center, which was the site for the first outpatient clinic for mental health.



James Floyd (right), JCMVAMC Director, thanks Janet Gearin for her 38 years of federal service.

Local Veterans Participate in National Creative Arts Festival

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

In January 2013, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) joined VA medical centers around the nation for the annual VA Creative Arts Competition, which serves as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help Veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

Veterans have the opportunity to enter more than 170 categories in art, music, dance, drama and creative writing. A national selection committee chooses first, second and third place winners among all of the entries and select winners are then invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

More than 3,400 Veterans participated in the 2013 competition and approximately 150 Veterans were invited to attend the national festival, which was held Oct. 21-27 in Reno, Nev. Among those invited were three JCMVAMC Veterans, Curt Douglas Russell and Connie and Wanda Lockwood, who are husband and wife.

Russell and Wanda Lockwood, both Army Veterans, won first place in the Vocal Group Patriotic - Music category, while Army Veteran Connie Lockwood won first place in the Solo Interpretive Performance - Dramatic category.

The festival was the first for Russell and Wanda Lockwood and the second for Connie Lockwood, who was invited to attend the 2008 festival.

Connie credits VA's creative arts program and the 2008 festival with saving his life.

"If it hadn't been for the creative arts, I wouldn't even be here today," said Connie, who contemplated taking his own life in 2008. "I've been waiting five years to go back and say thank you for saving my life."

In the past five years, Wanda has heard plenty of positive stories about the festival from Connie and was thrilled to be able to experience it for herself this year.

"It was amazing," said Wanda. "I met a lot of interesting people and it felt like we were all family. We had a lot of fun and there were all kinds of activities."

Throughout the week, the three Veterans had the opportunity to attend art and music workshops and meet other Veteran artists. They were also among 120 Veterans who were chosen to sing in the festival choir and they spent most of Oct. 21-26 in rehearsal. On Sunday, Oct. 27, the choir performed for the public at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno.

"You start with this raw product on Tuesday and you get this finished project on Sunday," said Connie. "You think you're never going to get there. But after all the hard work and practice, it comes off really well on Sunday. It's like an amazing transformation."

Connie said the long hours in rehearsal paid off.

"It's a lot of hard work," he said. "Everybody comes on Sunday and put their very best forward. It's an exhilarating feeling."

Russell said his favorite part of the festival was sharing stories with other Veterans.

"I really met a lot of nice people," said Russell. "That was the best part about it was meeting so many good people, very encouraging people. It's like meeting an extended family support group."

All three Veterans said they're already working on their entries for the 2014 creative arts competition and hope to be invited to the next festival, which will be held Oct. 27-Nov. 2, 2014 in Milwaukee, Wis.

"I want to go back," said Wanda. "It was so much fun. Last year, I was kind of slow on getting things done but this year I'm ready. I'm getting stuff accomplished so I can at least have a shot."

For more information about the JCMVAMC Creative Arts program, please contact Deborah Moreno at 918-577-4014. ★

Pictured from left to right: Army Veterans Curt Douglas Russell, Wanda Lockwood and Connie Lockwood display their first place medals they received during the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Reno, Nev.



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DAV Needs Volunteer Drivers

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV), a non-profit organization, is in need of volunteer drivers for its DAV Transportation Network, which provides free transportation for Veterans to and from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center for medical appointments.

Volunteer drivers must have a clean driving record and pass a background check. A Tuberculosis skin test is also required.

If you would like to serve Veterans as a volunteer DAV driver, please

contact Greg Sorenson at 918-577-3621 or Dax Allcorn at 918-577-3358 for more information. Volunteer

drivers do not receive payments for the services they provide. ★



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Register for the National Veterans Golden Age Games



This year, the National Veterans Golden Age Games will be held in nearby Fayetteville, Ark. during June 28 - July 2, 2014.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games is the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States, and the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

Events

The games include events such as air rifle, bowling, cycling, field (discus, shot, javelin), golf, horseshoes, mind sports (checkers, dominoes), nine-ball, shuffleboard, swimming, table

tennis and track. Badminton will be a demonstration sport only.

Eligibility

All Veterans, ages 55 or older, who currently receive inpatient or outpatient care from the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs are eligible.

All participants must be seen by their VA Primary Care provider to be medically cleared for the Games. Medical forms must be dated no more than six months prior to the Games June 28, 2014.

Registration

Registration deadline is March 28. For an application, Veterans can contact the following points of contact:

Deborah Moreno
Recreation Therapist, Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center
918-577-4014

Carla J Carmichael
Director, National Veterans Golden Age Games
(202) 461-0429

Michael Molina
Communications Director
(202) 560-7305

VA Adaptive Sports

To learn more about VA Adaptive Sports and upcoming events, please visit <http://www.va.gov/adaptive-sports/>. ★

Veterans participate in the 2013 National Veterans Golden Age Games, which was held in Buffalo, NY.



First Adaptive Cycling Clinic Held for Veterans

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

For three hours, Veterans slowly pedaled adaptive tricycles - while others quickly whisked around the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) Atrium on Nov. 21 during the first Adaptive Cycling Clinic.

Hosted by the JCMVAMC Adaptive Sports Program, Veterans were given the opportunity to ride and learn about the tricycles, which were provided by The Center for Individuals with Physical Challenges in Tulsa.

Vietnam Veteran David Wilson, who receives outpatient rehabilitation treatment at JCMVAMC, drove from his

home near Lake Tenkiller to participate in the cycling clinic.

Wilson cannot ride a regular bicycle due to spine and knee injuries that he suffered during his three combat tours in Vietnam, but he can sit down and pedal.

"I can't walk anymore," said Wilson, a Marine Corps Veteran. "So this was a good option. I have a regular bicycle, but I keep falling off and tearing up my tendons."

Navy Veteran William McCall also attended the clinic and said he is unable to ride a regular bicycle after

suffering two strokes. However, he enjoyed riding the adaptive tricycles.

"They're easy to ride and you don't have to try to balance and that's my problem with riding a regular bicycle," said McCall. "I really like that. They're just very comfortable."

Margie Crossno, the Program Coordinator of Adaptive Recreation and Volunteer Services for the Center, said there are many benefits to riding adaptive tricycles.

"There are a variety of different bikes that can be adjusted to meet any individual's strengths and needs," said Crossno. "It allows development and strengthening of your core strength. It's just a great way to exercise for someone who doesn't want to be stuck inside. It's a great way to get out and get healthy."

Crossno said her organization plans to participate in the Adaptive Cycling Clinic at the hospital on a quarterly basis, and also sponsor a community bike ride next year.

She also invited Veterans to participate in the Center's Adaptive Cycling Program, which offers three cycling classes with varying degrees of difficulty.

"We have an application process at the Center," said Crossno. "The application is online. They just need to fill it out and get their doctor to sign it and then we'll get them in, show them our place and get them on a bike."

To learn more about The Center for Individuals with Physical Challenges, call 918-794-4510 or visit their website at www.tulsacenter.org/. ★



Vietnam Veteran David Wilson rides an adaptive tricycle during the first Adaptive Cycling Clinic at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

Navy Veteran Excited to Exercise Again

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist



A group photo of Navy Veteran Jame Cromwell, his daughter Kirayna and wife Chelsea on Nov. 14 at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

In 1994, an industrial accident resulted in a serious leg injury for Navy Veteran Jame Cromwell. Over time, the Muskogee resident developed Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, a chronic pain condition most often affecting one of the limbs.

While he can walk, the pain in his body limits the amount of physical activity that he can do.

"I have good days, but then I have bad days," said Cromwell, who was medically discharged from the Navy in 2005 due to his injury.

Since 2007, Cromwell has received outpatient rehabilitation treatment at

the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center for his leg pain. During recent treatment, JCMVAMC rehab staff had Cromwell try a hand-cranked therapeutic tricycle, which was donated to the hospital by AMBUCS, Inc.

Cromwell enjoyed using the tricycle for physical therapy, so Deborah Morrow, JCMVAMC Chronic Pain Program Coordinator, asked him if he would be interested in having one for his home.

"Even on a good day, his ability to walk is limited to a certain distance and you can only go so far in a wheelchair," said Morrow. "With a bike, you can have some freedom."

Cromwell, who completed two deployments to the Persian Gulf during his Navy career, immediately said yes to the offer.

"I was really excited," he said. "I'll be able to get outside more and do some exercise, which is a big deal for me."

Thanks to the generosity of AMBUCS, a non-profit organization which strives to create mobility and independence for people with disabilities, Cromwell got his wish on Nov. 14 when the organization provided him with a free hand-cranked therapeutic tricycle.

Cromwell said he is looking forward to going on bike rides with his wife and children.

"My wife has been wanting me to get out and exercise, because she goes walking on a bike trail with the kids and I haven't had the opportunity to get out and do that in a long time," he said. "Now I have this bike and I can do that and it's great. I feel excited. Now, we're going to go get my wife a bike."

In the past year, AMBUCS has donated several therapeutic tricycles to Veterans. Kent Clingenpeel, President of AMBUCS, said the organization simply wants to give back to Veterans such as Cromwell who have served the nation.

"We're just trying to give back and help our Veterans get out and become mobile and get them back to exercising," said Clingenpeel. "This hand-cranked bike will allow him to strengthen his upper body so that he can get around better in his wheelchair and on the bike." ★

Tulsa VA Doctor Takes Stand Against Childhood Obesity

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

According to a recent survey by the United Health Foundation, Oklahoma ranks 44th out of 50 in 'healthiest' states. The report also estimates 32 percent of Oklahomans are considered obese.

Dr. Uma Koduri, a primary care physician at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa, hopes to reduce that obesity rate by providing education to elementary students.

"My dad use to always say, an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of a cure," said Koduri, who has worked as a VA physician for 19 years. "Obesity can affect all the organs in your body. It causes hypertension, diabetes, liver problems, reflux and high cholesterol which in turn can cause strokes and heart attacks."

In April 2013, Koduri organized a Childhood Obesity Awareness School

"Obesity can affect all the organs in your body."



Dr. Uma Koduri displays a poster she uses during her 1-mile walks with students. The students are given sunshine yellow t-shirts which are intended to raise awareness for childhood obesity. Submitted Photo.

Walkathon at Penn Elementary School in North Tulsa to promote healthy eating and exercise. The event received the attention of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), of which Koduri is a member, which was impressed by her efforts to educate youth.

The AAPI asked Koduri to lead a campaign to provide education to 100 schools throughout the nation and gave her a \$100,000 grant.

On Nov. 1, Koduri kicked off the campaign with the help of physicians around the nation. She plans to personally visit at least 10 elementary schools throughout Oklahoma.

"It all boils down to simple things that you can do to prevent obesity," said Koduri. "Basically educate the kids not to eat a lot of processed food, chips, candy and pop. Instead, they need to eat more fruit and vegetables and play outside more rather than just sit and play video games. It's very basic."

During her school visits, Koduri teaches students about the 5-2-1-0 concept, which consists of five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, two hours or less of TV and video games per day, one hour of physical activity per day and zero sugary beverages.

She also encourages participation in the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award, a six-week program where participants track their exercise and food consumption online. If they meet minimum requirements, participants receive a signed certificate from the President.

To reinforce the education, she also gives each school educational posters and 300 t-shirts that feature nutrition and exercise information. Koduri also brings plants and seeds to her presentations and speaks to the students about



Dr. Uma Koduri, a primary care physician at the Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa, speaks to students in Tulsa about the benefits of exercise and healthy eating. Submitted Photo.

ways to grow fruits and vegetables at home.

"We want the kids to learn how to grow a kitchen garden" she said. "Just to show them that fruits and vegetables are healthier and you can grow them in your back yard."

Following the presentation, Koduri provides the students and teachers with 300 pedometers, a portable device that counts a person's steps, and leads a one-mile walkathon.

"Walking itself is one of the best exercises," said Koduri. "When you have a pedometer, you tend to walk more regularly because you want to see those numbers. You want to put in like 5,000 to 10,000 steps per day."

Koduri said her desire to improve the lives of others comes from her father who was also a physician.

"He use to do a lot of community service and see patients without taking fees," she said. "He just liked to serve people and educate them for healthier lives. When I was five or six years old, I use to tell everyone that I wanted to be like my dad." ★

Chaplain Service Honors Volunteer Musicians

Story and photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Since 1973, Ineta Bebb has played the piano for the Sunday morning Chapel service at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

As a volunteer, she typically donates her time twice a month to play hymns for Veterans and their family members. After the service, she then plays the piano for St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Muskogee where she is the musical director.

For Bebb, donating her time is a way for her to give back to our nation's Veterans.

"I have a God given talent that I've been glad to share," said Bebb, who also volunteers as a vocalist when she is needed. "It's the least I can do for people who really need to be inspired."

On Oct. 22, the Chaplain Service held a Spiritual Care Week Celebration in the Chapel to honor Bebb and eight other volunteer musicians.

Every Chapel service, a volunteer pianist and vocalist perform music for the service, which is also broadcast for inpatient Veterans on the medical center's closed circuit television system.

"They're all excellent musicians," said Chaplain Julia Shreve. "These are wonderful people who are committed to the

spiritual care of our Veterans."

Muriel Saunders, who has been a volunteer musician for Chaplain Service for more than 20 years, typically sings for the service three times per month as a vocalist. She also said she enjoys giving back to Veterans.

"I was an Air Force wife, so I feel like I'm military, too, and this is my way to say thank you to all the Veterans for what they have done for us," said Saunders. "It's a privilege to come and do this. It's a joy. I wouldn't miss it for anything."

Saunders said it is gratifying to know that Veterans who are unable to attend the service in the Chapel can watch it on television.

"I really feel that it's being appreciated," said Saunders. "Even though they can't come down to the Chapel, I know they can see it on television. If I can boost somebody's spirits and help them feel better, than that makes me feel good, too."

Bebb also said she enjoys the feedback from Veterans and their family members who attend the services.

"You get so much feedback from the people that they like it and that's always good," said Bebb. "You always get more out of it than you give." ★

Ineta Bebb has played the piano for the Sunday morning Chapel service at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center for more than 40 years.



Managing Stress by Being Mindful

By Stephanie Ward, Chief of Social Work

Stress is something we cannot avoid. It results from any change you must adapt to, ranging from actual physical danger to achieving some long-desired success. Often we view stress as something bad. However, stress is actually essential to life. It is how we respond to stress that determines its impact on our life.

Stress management is a profitable business. There are 36,657 stress management books to choose from on Amazon. There are thousands of different stress management techniques and workshops on how to reduce our stress and even manage it.

A lot of research has been conducted on how stress affects our lives, our health and our society. Most of us would agree that stress impacts our lives, can make us sick both mentally and physically, and can cause bad behavior. The book, *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*, by Davis, Eshelman and McKay (2008), report there are four sources of stress:

1. Your environment, which includes weather, pollution, noise, traffic, etc.
2. Social stressors such as finances, job stressors, relationship conflicts, demands for your time and attention.
3. Physiological stress such as poor nutrition, lack of exercise, aging, adolescence and health issues.
4. Your thoughts. How you interpret and label your present experience and what you predict for your future can either stress or relax you. If you are called to your boss' office and your thought is that you are going to get fired or get in trouble, you begin to have a stress reaction.

Mindfulness has become a common way to help people reduce stress and anxiety. Mindfulness is focusing on one thing in the moment - each breath you take, each step as you walk, the sights and sounds around you. To be mindful is to be completely present or aware in the moment.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction was founded in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts to treat the chronically ill. Many studies have been conducted to determine if mindfulness is effective to treat many chronic illnesses.

In 2004, the Journal of Psychosomatic Research published an article, *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Health Benefits: A Meta-Analysis*. This article concluded that mind-

fulness was useful for a broad range of chronic disorders and problems. They concluded that mindfulness training could enhance general features of coping with distress and disability in everyday life, as well as under a more serious disorder or stress.

One mindfulness technique to try when you find your mind racing with stress is the S.T.O.P. method.

S.T.O.P Method

- S** - **Stop what you are doing and put things down for a minute.**
- T** - **Take a breath. Breathe normally and follow your breath coming in and out of your nose.**
- O** - **Observe your thoughts, feelings and emotions. Notice your thoughts are not facts and they are not permanent. Notice any emotions that are there and name them. Then notice your body. Are you standing or sitting? How is your posture? Any aches or pains?**
- P** - **Proceed with something that will support you in the moment. Whether it is talking to a friend or just rubbing your shoulders.**

(Source: World of Psychology, PsychCentral Blog)

And always remember:

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.” -William James, an American philosopher and psychologist. ★

Grandpa Had Diabetes?

Why Your Health History Matters

Tracing family histories has become a popular pastime. Family ancestry websites have sprung up on the Internet and a recent TV series features celebrities in search of their past. A perhaps less glamorous, but very important, part of a family's legacy is its health history.

Family health histories matter because your risk of getting certain diseases and chronic conditions is higher if family members have or had them. Your health care team can provide better care when they are familiar with your family health history. For instance, if they know your grandfather or parent had diabetes, they can encourage you to watch your diet, stay active and get tested.

How Do I Find Information?

Collecting family health information may be easier for some people than for others. Here are some ways to go about it:

Ask Questions. One way to get health information about family members is to ask. Family vacations, visits or gatherings are good opportunities to ask questions. If you don't know how your grandparents or great grandparents died or want to know if anyone in your family has heart disease, talk to parents, aunts, uncles, cousins or siblings.

Locate Death Certificates. Death certificates include a person's age and cause of death. Try the state health department or county clerk's office where the family member(s) you're inquiring about died. Check the "Government" section of the phone book for phone numbers. You also can try the state's archives office.

Consult Family History Resources. Websites (most of them commercial), books and other resources with helpful information for putting together family trees might also be useful in tracking down family health histories.

How Do I Record Information?

While some people record health histories in a notebook or journal, paper copies could be lost or destroyed in a fire, flood or other natural disaster. Not having your medical history available to your health team when you may need it most could cause another disaster – to your health and safety.

Avoid these problems by using a secure, online tool. My HealtheVet's "Health History" section under "Track Health" lets you record your family health history, along with your personal health summary and military health history. The information you record is secure but you can make it available to your health care team and whoever else you care to entrust with it. You also can download it to your computer or another device, such as a thumb drive or CD, using the VA Blue Button.

Keeping Current

Be sure to keep your family health history up to date and share the information with other family members and your health team. ★

MOVE! Program & Healthy Living Calendar

Weight Management Program (MOVE!)

If you are carrying extra weight, losing weight and keeping it off can be one of the best things you can do to protect your health. Excess weight puts you at risk for problems like heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, sleep apnea and gallstones. The best way to manage your weight is to eat wisely and be as physically active as possible.



VA offers the MOVE! Program, a weight self-management program for Veterans who want to improve their health. The first step is to let your VA Primary Care team know that you are interested in MOVE!

For more information about the following MOVE! and Healthy Living classes, please call 918-577-3214.



MOVE! Introduction Class

Provides an introduction to MOVE!, VA's weight self-management program.

Muskogee: Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m. in the MOVE/Nutrition office located on the 2nd floor.

Tulsa: Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room.



MOVE! Group Class

Learn how to improve your eating, exercise and behavior habits.

Muskogee: Wednesdays, excluding federal holidays, from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. and 3 - 4 p.m. in the auditorium.

Tulsa: Tuesdays, excluding federal holidays, at 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room.

Vinita: Thursdays, excluding federal holidays, at 12:30 p.m - 1:30 p.m. in the Conference Room by appointment only, class size limited.

MOVE! Support Group

Receive support from other Veterans who have participated in the MOVE! Program.

Tulsa and Vinita: Fourth Thursday of the month at 2 p.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room (Tulsa) and Conference Room (Vinita).

Healthy Living Classes

Cooking Education Program

This program provides hands on experience and helps Veterans become more independent and responsible for their nutritional care.

Muskogee: Wednesdays in the Muskogee hospital auditorium, excluding federal holidays, at 9 a.m.



Diabetes/Pre-Diabetic Education

Learn survival skills for living with diabetes and improving eating habits to reduce risks. No referral is needed and spouses are encouraged to attend.

Muskogee: Tuesdays, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m. in the MOVE/Nutrition office located on the 2nd floor.

Tulsa: Mondays, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. in the Boomer/Sooner Room.



Lipid Education

Learn how to improve your heart health through lifestyle changes.

Muskogee: Offered on an individual basis.

Tulsa: First and Third Thursday, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m. in the Sooner Room.



Nutrition & Wellness

Learn the basics of nutrition.

Muskogee: Offered on an individual basis.

Tulsa: Fourth Monday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the Sooner Room.

Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop

The Open Art Studio and Writing Workshop gives Veterans an opportunity to create art or write and socialize with other Veterans.

Muskogee: Mondays, excluding federal holidays, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Contact Deborah Moreno at 918-577-4014 for more information.





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Veterans Crisis Line



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The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center and Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics served approximately 37,000 Veterans from a 25-county area in Eastern Oklahoma in 2012.



Jack. C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (Muskogee)
918-577-3000 or toll free at 1-888-397-8387



Jack C. Montgomery East (Muskogee)
918-577-3699



Behavioral Medicine Clinic (Tulsa)
918-610-2000



Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic (Tulsa)
918-628-2500
or toll free at 1-888-398-8387



Hartshorne VA Outpatient Clinic
888-878-1598



Vinita VA Outpatient Clinic
918-713-5400

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